

Relative symptom importance in the diagnosis of schizophrenia : An Anglo-American Egyptian comparison

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This work aimed to study the cross-national differences in symptom importance in the diagnosis of schizophrenia among the three countries. A questionnaire included a list of 31 possible schizophrenic manifestations (Wills and Bannister, 1965) was submitted to psychiatrists who had at least four years of postgraduate training and experience in psychiatry. They were chosen from the official lists. Restriction and incongruity of affect ranked first in the Egyptian study compared with the British and American ones. Their results were in agreement with other studies who stated that what is normal emotional expression in an Anglo Saxon culture may suggest a schizoid reduction of emotional response in a Mediterranean culture. The top ten symptoms in the Egyptian hierarchy for diagnosis of schizophrenia were incongruity and restricted affect, formal thought disorder, thought block, thought withdrawal, incoherence, passivity feeling, neologism, hallucination, delusions and ideas of reference ; while in the British study, formal thought disorder ranked first, followed by incongruity of affect, neologism, thought block, passivity of feeling, paranoid delusions, stereotype of other delusions, thought withdrawal and ideas of references. The Americans ranked symptoms of importance for diagnosis of schizophrenia as follows : Formal thought disorder, delusions, paranoid delusions, incongruity of affect, hallucinations, ideas of reference, neologism, depersonalization and thought block. The more the symptom is diagnostic, the more cross-national differences are met with and vice versa.

The possible causes of cross-national differences may be due to different conceptual orientation, difficulty in assessment and cultural differences.

The Egyptian hierarchy of symptoms showed a definite degree of consistency among Egyptian psychiatrists.